DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 992 CE 048 020

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TITLE Development of Affective Characteristics in Students in Vocational-Technical Nursing Programs.
PUB DATE 2 Sep 87
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; *Assertiveness; *Attitude Change; *College Programs; *Nursing Education; *Personal Autonomy; Postsecondary Education; Student Attitudes; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine what progress is made by nursing students during their first two years of study in the development of affective characteristics closely associated with professional level practice. Two affective characteristics associated with professionalism were studied; autonomy and assertiveness. The Inner Directed Scale of Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory was selected to measure autonomy, and Gambrill's Assertion Inventory was selected to measure assertiveness. Study participants were students in a practical nursing degree program, students in the associate degree program (which served as the second year of the practical nursing program), and students at the sophomore level in a traditional baccalaureate nursing program. Approximately 30 practical nursing and associate degree students completed administrations of the two tests in fall and spring; 18 of the traditional degree sophomores completed two sittings of the two tests. The practical and associate program students tended to be older, were married and had children and prior work or college experience, whereas the traditional program students were younger and had less life and work experience. Testing results indicated significant gains in self-directedness for both the practical and associate degree groups. The baccalaureate students made higher independence-scale gains, although the difference was not significant. All three groups gained in assertiveness between the fall and the spring. The results of the study should be more fully investigated by planners of integrated curricula and considered when creating articulated programs. (KC)

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ED284992

DEVELOPMENT OF AFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS IN STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL NURSING PROGRAMS

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Biographical Information

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Dr. Kintgen-Andrews teaches in the Nursing Education focus courses of the University of Minnesota School of Nursing graduate program. She recently served as Interim Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Study and currently is a member of the School of Nursing Undergraduate Education Task Force. She frequently serves as a curriculum consultant and has been the director of two consortium nursing curriculum projects aimed at educational mobility.

DEVELOPMENT OF AFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS IN STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL NURSING PROGRAMS

The curriculum model adopted in 1976 by a rural nursing education consortium was designed to promote educational mobility and emphasized the cognitive development of students. A theory base is defined for each of the four levels (nursing assistant, practical nurse, associate degree, and baccalaureate) and performance objectives are primarily in cognitive terms (Kintgen-Andrews, 1982). The academic success of students progressing from level to level has given credence to the basic curriculum design but there had been no formal study of the affective development of students during their first two years of study. What progress is made during each of these two years in the development of affective characteristics closely associated with professional level practice? What assumptions may be made by the baccalaureate programs receiving the consortium associate degree graduates? Are changes indicated in the lower level programs?

Two affective characteristics associated with professionalism figure importantly in the nursing literature: autonomy (Christman, 1978; Flaherty, 1980; Grissum, 1976; Kellams, 1977; Maas and Jacox, 1977; Stuart, 1978; Woolley, 1978) and

assertiveness (Bergman, 1985; Bush & Kjervik, 1979; Carpenito and Duespohl, 1985; Herman, 1978). The decision was made to measure the development of these characteristics in consortium practical nursing and associate degree students over one academic year.

A nursing literature review failed to identify any studies that deal with the development of autonomy in students during the period of their enrollment in practical nursing or associate degree nursing programs. Registered nurses who had completed generic baccalaureate degree programs were studied by Kramer (1972) and registered nurses working in chronic and acute care by Van Voorst (1984). Goldstein (1980) compared graduating associate degree students with graduating baccalaureate degree students and Mealey and Peterson (1974), studying diploma students, measured the effect of a psychiatric nursing course. Likewise, no studies were identified which dealt with the development of assertiveness in students during the period of their enrollment in practical nursing or associate degree nursing programs. Iwasiw and Olson (1986) compared "post-R.N. baccalaureate nurses" with registered nurses without baccalaureate degrees and Chang-Yet and Calvert (1980) studied the development of assertiveness in registered nurses during the

period of their enrollment in a baccalaureate program designed for baccalaureate students.

Testing Instruments

The Inner Directed Scale (I scale) of Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) was selected to measure autonomy. The PIO I scale was considered appropriate because of the congruence between the author's explanation of the purpose of the scale and the description of autonomy in the nursing literature. Shostom (1980) states that the I scale "is designed to measure whether an individual's mode of reaction is characteristically 'self-oriented' or 'other-oriented'." He explains further that "inner, or self-directed individuals are guided primarily by internalized principles and motivations while other-directed persons are to a great extent influenced by their peer group or other external forces." (p.4). Maas and Jacox (1977) state: "Autonomy is the condition of self determination without outside control... the individual practitioner maintains prerogatives for his own judgments and practice." (p.17) Stuart (1978) says: "Self discipline and self-regulation are distinctive and important attributes of professionals..." (p.19) Kellams (1977) emphasizes that

professional nurses "are not controlled by the patient, the physician, colleagues or line authority" (p.30).

The POI is a self-report instrument. The I scale consists of 127 two-choice comparative value and behavior judgment items. Reliability data reported include coefficients ranging from .71 to .93 (Shostrom, 1980). An extensive range of validity studies are reported (Shostrom, 1980; Oakland et al, 1978).

Gambrill's Assertion Inventory was selected to measure assertiveness. The Assertion Inventory is a self-report instrument which permits respondents to note for each of 40 assertive behaviors their degree of discomfort, their probability of engaging in the behavior, and situations they would like to handle more assertively (Gambrill and Richey, 1975). Reliability coefficients of .87 for discomfort and .81 for response probability are reported. Validity was established by comparisons between clinical and normative samples and between performance of the clinical group before and after assertiveness training (Gambrill and Richey, 1985).

The Students

The non-traditional curriculum model provides for full articulation between the practical nursing curriculum (which begins with a nursing assistant segment) and the associate degree curriculum; in other words, the curricula are organized so that the practical nursing program serves as the first year of the associate degree program as well as preparation for performance as a practical nurse while the one year associate degree curriculum is built upon the practical nursing base. The participating practical nursing programs are located in vocational-technical institutions and the one year associate degree curriculum is under the control of a community college. Two participating university generic baccalaureate nursing programs have agreed to "articulation plans" intended to promote a smooth transition for the consortium associate degree graduate entering baccalaureate level nursing education.

The decision was made to invite all students in the practical nursing program which had had the longest experience with the consortium curriculum and all students in the associate degree program to take the two tests in the Fall of 1983 and in the Spring of 1984. All of the practical nursing students and all of the associate degree students agreed to participate.

Thirty-one of the practical nursing students completed the POI in both the fall and spring while 32 completed the Assertion Inventory in both testing sessions. Thirty associate degree students completed both the tests in both of the sessions.

Volunteers were sought from the sophomore class of one of the two consortium university generic baccalaureate nursing programs to form a comparison group for the associate degree students. The thesis was that both the associate degree students and the university sophomores were in the second year of their preparatory programs and that both would have approximately two additional years of preparation for professional nursing. Seventeen generic baccalaureate sophomore students completed the two testing sessions.

The composition of the student groups is interesting. As far as the practical nursing and associate degree students are concerned, some aspects are probably reflective of the consortium program emphasis upon articulation while others probably reflect general trends in the composition of student bodies in nursing programs.

Female students comprised 90% to 94% in the three groups of students. The associate degree group were the oldest (86%

twenty-five or older and 23% over 35), the practical nursing group next oldest (45% twenty-five or older and 10% over 35), and the baccalaureate sophomore group the youngest (12% twenty-five or older and none over 35). The associate degree group included the lowest percentage of single persons (13%), followed by the practical nursing group (48%), while the baccalaureate sophomore group were largely single (88%). Percentages of the groups having children followed a similar pattern.

At least the equivalent of one year of full time employment was common in each of the groups but the associate degree group included the highest percentage of persons with more than four years of full-time employment experience, or the equivalent in part-time experience, (90%), followed by the practical nursing group (52%), and the baccalaureate sophomore group (35%). Percentages of the groups having had employment experience in the field of nursing followed a similar pattern (87% for the associate degree group, 60% for the practical nursing group, and 47% for the baccalaureate sophomore group).

Previous college level educational experience was common in the three groups. Two practical nursing students (6%) and four associate degree students (13%) had previously earned

baccalaureate degrees. While only one baccalaureate sophomore students (6%) had previously earned a baccalaureate degree, fourteen of the 17 had earned college credits prior to their previous year in school ranging from 35 to 116 quarter credits. Current educational aspirations were highest among the baccalaureate sophomore groups (75% intending to earn masters degrees) but also notable among the other groups (63% of the associate degree group intending at least to earn baccalaureate degrees and 10% intending to earn master's degrees; 35% of the practical nursing groups intending to earn baccalaureate degrees).

Testing Results

Testing results indicated significant gains in self-directedness for both the practical nursing and the associate degree groups. (See I scale scores in Table 1). Relative to the thesis that both the associate degree students and the generic baccalaureate sophomores were in the second year of their preparatory programs and that both would have approximately two additional years of preparation for <u>professional</u> nursing, these two groups were compared. The baccalaureate students made higher I scale gains although the difference was not significant ($p>.05$). Spring I

scale scores compare favorably with scores for relevant samples recorded in the literature. See Table 2.

[Table 1 about here]

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 summarizes the performance of the three groups on the Assertion Inventory in the Fall and in the Spring. It should be noted in reference to these data that lower scores indicate lower levels of discomfort related to assertive behavior and greater probability of behaving assertively.

[Table 3 about here]

Testing results showed gains for all three student groups between the Fall and the Spring. A significantly lower level of discomfort associated with assertive behavior was reported by the practical nursing groups in the Spring that in the Fall ($p<.01$). The associate degree group in the Spring reported a significantly lower level of discomfort associated with assertive behavior as well as a significantly higher probability of responding assertively than in the Fall ($p<.01$). Comparisons between the associate degree students and the baccalaureate

generic sophomores showed greater gains by the associate degree group on both measures. The decrease in discomfort associated with assertive behavior between the Fall and the Spring is significantly greater for associate degree students than for the generic baccalaureate sophomores ($p<.01$).

Gambrill and Richey (1975) identify four profiles on the basis of normative data for the Assertion Inventory. Figure 1 explains these profiles while Figure 2 depicts the reclassification of students in the three groups as they move toward greater probability of performing assertively and lesser degrees of discomfort associated with assertive behavior. The most notable recordings are those which show an increase from 30% in the Fall to 70% in the Spring for associate degree students classified as assertive.

[Figure 1 about here]

[Figure 2 about here]

Discussion

The results of the exploration are vitally interesting to those involved in the development of the consortium program described.

More comprehensive study is needed even for purposes of the consortium program under study; certainly a host of questions can be raised in connection with the broader picture as nursing educators proceed to implement the "Basic Entry Level" (BEL) position and arrive at more adequate answers to questions about transition from vocational-technical education to professional education. Some of these questions are suggested below:

- One might not anticipate extensive development of self-directedness and assertiveness to occur in lower level educational programs which prepare for dependent nursing roles. Are self-directedness and assertiveness developed to a similar extent in more conventional practical nursing and associate degree programs or is the emphasis upon articulation a factor in such development? Do students with high levels of personal autonomy and assertiveness experience conflicts when their immediate task is preparation for a dependent role?

- Are self-directedness and assertiveness as personal characteristics related to the demonstration of autonomous and assertive behavior in the clinical situation?

- Are there typical patterns of the development of self-directedness and assertiveness related to various kinds of nursing programs (i.e., practical nursing, associate degree, diploma, baccalaureate)?

- How are patterns of development of self-directedness and assertiveness related to such factors as age, life experiences, educational background and intelligence?

- What program characteristics (faculty philosophies, recruitment and selection policies, teaching strategies, etc.) are related to the development of self-directedness and assertiveness?

The above questions only begin to deal with the complex issue of affective development for professional practice. Obviously, studies of considerable scope and depth must be undertaken as nursing educators respond to the BEL debate, prepare to make the necessary changes in nursing education, and enter a whole new era of nursing education and practice.

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TABLE 1

MEAN I SCALE SCORES

Student Group	Fall	Spring	Gain
P.N. (N=31)	80.48	86.06	5.58*
A.D. (N=30)	86.87	91.20	4.33*
G.B.S.** (N=17)	84.88	90.82	5.94*

*p<.01

**Generic baccalaureate sophomore

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF STUDY GROUP I SCALE MEANS

WITH MEANS REPORTED FOR RELEVANT SAMPLES

Study	Sample	Sample Size	Mean
Present	P.N. Students (Fall)	31	80.48
	(Spring)		86.06
	A.D. Students (Fall)	30	86.87
	(Spring)		91.20
	G.B.S. Students (Fall)	17	84.88
	(Spring)		90.82
Kramer, 1972	Generic Baccalaureate Degree Nurses	195	86.57
Van Voorst, 1984	Chronic Care Nurses	14	89.9
	Acute Care Nurses	11	88.3
Goldstein, 1980	Graduating Associate Degree Students	159	85.11
	Graduating Baccalaureate Degree Students	204	89.62
Mealey and Peterson, 1974	Diploma Seniors Before Psychiatric Nursing Course	39	82.00
	After Psychiatric Nursing Course		90.00

TABLE 3

MEAN ASSERTION INVENTORY SCORES

Student Group	Response Probability			Degree of Discomfort		
	Fall	Spring	Change	Fall	Spring	Change
P.N. (N=32)	109.4	105.6	3.8	101.3	94.4	6.9*
A.D. (N=30)	101.9	92.0	9.9*	99.7	83.9	15.8*
G.B.S. (N=17)	103.5	100.0	3.5	91.1	89.5	1.5

*p<.01

FIGURE 1

GAMBRILL'S FOUR PROFILES

Discomfort	Assertiveness Response Probability	
	Low (105+)	High (104-)
High (96+)	Unassertive	Anxious Performer
Low (95-)	Doesn't Care	Assertive

FIGURE 2

FALL TO SPRING STUDENT CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

	FALL		SPRING	
P.N. (N=32)	"Unassertive" 21 students (65.6%)	"Anxious performer" 1 student (3.1%)	"Unassertive" 11 Students (34.4%)	"Anxious performer" 2 students (6.2%)
	"Doesn't Care" 3 students (9.4%)	"Assertive" 7 students (21.9%)	"Doesn't Care" 9 students (28.1%)	"Assertive" 10 students (31.2%)
A.D. (N=30)	"Unassertive" 12 students (40%)	"Anxious performer" 4 students (13.3%)	"Unassertive" 4 students (13.3%)	"Anxious performer" 2 students (6.7%)
	"Doesn't Care" 5 students (16.7%)	"Assertive" 9 students (30%)	"Doesn't Care" 3 students (10%)	"Assertive" 21 students (70%)
G.B.S. (N=17)	"Unassertive" 4 studens (23.5%)	"Anxious performer" 3 students (17.6%)	"Unassertive" 2 students (11.8%)	"Anxious performer" 4 students (23.5%)
	"Doesn't Care" 5 students (29.4%)	"Assertive" 5 students (29.4%)	"Doesn't Care" 2 students (11.8%)	"Assertive" 9 students (52.9%)